

19 March 1970

Dear Harold:

Re: Lifton and Roffman: The situation is this:

I had not been in touch with Lifton for a long time, but have maintained steady, though not frequent, correspondence with Newcomb. I mentioned to Fred that Roffman had interviewed Specter, and I outlined the tone of the interview-- I did not send him or anybody a copy of Roffman's memo, but roughly described Specter's reaction to being interviewed by someone who knew the case. I believe that I wrote that letter in longhand and do not have a copy (at least a quick look through recent mail discloses none), so I cannot recall details. I had written to Fred previously about Howard, and Howard had previously written to Fred for a copy of Zapruder.

Fred discussed my account of Roffman/Specter with Dave, and Dave subsequently wrote to me asking for Howard's address and phone number. I do not know whether it was before or after he learned about Roffman, but Lifton-- a short time before writing to me about Howard-- wrote with inquiries about Shaneyfelt/Zapruder N.O. testimonies. I think now that that may have been a come-on, a way of resuming discontinued correspondence before he got around to questioning about Howard-- I am not sure about that, but in retrospect it seems possible.

Anyway, Dave wrote and asked for Howard's address and phone. I responded that I would first ask Howard if he wanted to get in touch with Dave, and I told Dave to sit and wait. (I suspect, too, that he previously asked for the address from Newcomb, who had it, but that Newcomb did not give it, for reasons similar to mine) I wrote to Howard, told him that Dave wanted to get in touch, and strongly advised Howard against it, or at least to treat Lifton with extreme caution. I also told Howard why. My letters to Howard on this were-- I believe-- in longhand, and I did not make copies, but I told Howard it was all right for him to tell you what I said of Lifton if you asked. My advice and warning to Howard were not unlike yours; in some ways I was even more severe than you.

Given the knowledge that Lifton knew that Howard was working in the field, and that eventually he would learn of Howard through others, even if he did not hear of him through Newcomb or me, I thought it best to go ahead and tell Howard what Dave wanted. I still think that that was the best thing to do, for if Dave had gotten to Howard by any other means-- and I think eventually he would have-- then Howard might have suffered any number of irreparable disasters by not being properly cautioned. In the present circumstances Howard's information about Lifton is a shield that I think will guard him even against the inevitable blandishments.

Even in retrospect I think that the present situation is better than any which might have arisen if Dave had gotten to Howard by other means.

Howard knows how Lifton stands with Liebeler, but I do not think he knows of Lifton's relationship with Thornley. Nor does he know from me the nature and extent of Thornley's involvement in the assassination. If he wants it, I'll send Howard the States-Item account of Thornley's N.O. grand jury testimony, which expands the published record on Thornley. To me, ~~it is enough~~ what is published is sufficient to indicate Thornley's illicit involvement in the case. That and other things fully convince me that Thornley was involved, and I am not likely to be influenced by Lifton's irrational pleas otherwise, no matter what I may pretend in order to cause Lifton to believe that I am undecided. (The same applies to Newcomb and his relationship with Bradley.)

So much for that. If Howard thinks that it was rash of me to mention his Speceter ~~interview~~ interview to Newcom, then I sincerely regret it, and apologise.

Lifton pushes hard enough so that eventually he would have gotten in touch with Howard. No contact at all would be best, but since I believe it was inevitable, I do not regret that it happened in this way. I have told Howard what sort of treatment to expect from Dave (that Dave will try to get gold in return for asshole droppings, and that he will seek to create friction between Howard and others-- especially in his relationship with you and me); when Dave lives up to that expectation-- as I am sure he will, and as you know he will-- the Howard will know better how to treat Dave, and he will know better who is likely to serve his interest and who is likely to injure it.

The experience has to come, and it has to be lived-- it's inevitable; I think that it is best for it to happen in this way than in any other.

Still,

cc. Roffman